

The Post

GOOD MORNING!

Conscience has no more to do with gallantry than it has to do with politics.

Richard Sheridan

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Spying Activities Of Army Rapped

WASHINGTON (AP) — Army intelligence agents have spied on Sen. Adlai E. Stevenson III, former Gov. Otto Kerner and about 300 other civilians in Illinois alone, Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. said Wednesday.

Ervin, a North Carolina Democrat who heads the Senate subcommittee on constitutional rights, said his information was supplied by a former Army agent who was assigned to political surveillance in Illinois.

"The Army investigated these men during their campaigns for office and while they were in office," said Ervin.

Ervin disputed earlier claims by the military that investigations of civilians were limited to those who demonstrated a penchant for violence or other illegal conduct.

"It was enough," he said in a statement, "that they opposed or did not actively support the government's policy in Vietnam

or that they disagreed with domestic policies of the administration, or that they were in contact or sympathetic to people with such views."

Aside from Stevenson and Kerner, Ervin said, the Illinois target list of the 113th Military Intelligence Group— with jurisdiction over the Midwest— included Democratic Rep. Abner Mikva and a host of state and local officials, political contributors, newspaper reporters, lawyers and church figures.

Kerner, now a federal judge, headed the presidential commission on violence which submitted a report that stirred some controversy.

A spokesman said the Army is gravely concerned by the reports and is looking into them. He added that Army policy emphatically prohibits collection of information of the type reportedly gathered in Illinois.

At the White House, presidential press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler said in response to a question, "It's inconceivable to me that that would take place. We certainly don't condone it."

Stevenson told a reporter Wednesday he felt he was being observed on several occasions during this year's campaign.

But he thought then the mysterious photographers with telephoto lenses were from the opposite political camp.

Now, he said, he doesn't know whether the alleged spying was "by the political opposition in Illinois, by the military or by whom."

The Illinois Democrat added "there is no place in a free society for snooping by the military in the peaceful political affairs of citizens."

Mikva told the House that if the reported practice is widespread "we have reached a frightening state against civilian control over the military."

Chairman George H. Mahon, D-Tex., of the House Appropriations Committee, said that if the accounts are accurate he shares Mikva's sense of outrage and will make inquiries at the Pentagon to prevent recurrence of such surveillance.

Ervin said the former agent would be called to testify before his subcommittee next February.

The senator did not identify his informant but The Evening Star said he is John M. O'Brien.

The newspaper reported O'Brien identified himself in an interview as a domestic spy for

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the Army and said of his activities:

"The Army wanted to determine their political views so that in certain situations we would know how they would react; whether they would condone violence or be for nonviolence."

"Apparently," said Ervin, "anyone who in the Army's definition was 'left of center' was a prospective candidate for political surveillance."

In a letter to Ervin, the agent said the 113th's intelligence gathering switched from strictly military information-gathering in early 1968 and after June 1969, "my entire effort... was directed against individuals and organizations not associated with any military activities."

He said the information was "placed in classified military files, with a copy of the information being sent to various other federal agencies and to the command center at Ft. Holabird, Md."

There have been earlier reports, including one on the NBC television program "First Tuesday" on Dec. 1, that other regional military intelligence centers were building files on civilians.

NBC newsman Sander Vancur said that more than 100 plainclothes agents of the 116th Military Intelligence Group in Washington had compiled dossiers on many private citizens, including Sen. J. W. Fulbright, D-Ark.

Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and a longtime critic of U.S. policy in Vietnam, later demanded of Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird whether the Army did have such a file on him. Laird said he wasn't sure.

The former agent who wrote Ervin said at one point, "our collection team in the Chicago area was collecting information on every individual."